Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Previously presented) A method for improving utilization in a peer-to-peer network having a plurality of nodes, the method comprising:

hosting one or more storage slots in each node in the peer-to-peer network, a first portion of the storage slots hosting storage zones and any remaining storage slots at each node allocated as a free slot reserve storage slot;

storing data in the storage slots hosting storage zones; and

when a storage slot hosting a storage zone reaches a full capacity of the storage zone,

splitting the data in the storage slot hosting the storage zone into a first and second portion,

converting a free slot reserve storage slot into a new storage slot hosting a storage zone, and

transferring the second portion of the data to the new storage slot hosting the storage zone.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein each node is assigned more storage slots than its actual physical capacity allows.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein each node is allocated N − 1 virtual slots for each N storage slots allocated.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein a storage zone at a node is transferred to another node in the peer-to-peer network if the data inserted into the storage zones at the node fills the actual physical capacity of the node.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 4 where a local search for candidate nodes in a transfer set is conducted prior to transfer of the storage zone.

6.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein the new storage zone is transferred to and hosted by a free slot reserve storage slot on a different node when the storage zones hosted at the node exceed the storage slots allocated at the node.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 6 where a local search for candidate nodes in a transfer set is conducted prior to transfer of the new storage zone.

8.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the data is associated with hashkeys of a hash function and where each storage zone is responsible for a subset of all hashkeys.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the hashkeys are uniformly distributed by the hash function.

10.   (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the storage slots are of a fixed-size.

11 – 20 . (Cancelled)

21.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein each storage zone is hosted by a storage slot located within a particular physical node.

22 – 24.   (Cancelled).

25.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein a zone is hosted within a slot and a size of the slot is a system wide constraint representing the limit size to which a zone can grow before it fills the slot and must be split.

26.   (Cancelled).

27.   (Cancelled).